



## Western States Land Commissioners Association

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# *Western States Land Commissioners Association Testifies in Support of ACE Act*

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**Tuesday, July 29, 2014**

Western States Land Commissioners Association (WSLCA) members testified in front of Congress today in support of the Advancing Conservation and Education Act of 2014 (ACE). H.R. 4901 is a bipartisan bill cosponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Rep. Peter Defazio (D-OR). This legislation would provide a mechanism for the United States to acquire lands owned by the western states that are located inside federal conservation areas, while fairly compensating the states for those lands. The bill was introduced into the House in June and is moving through the legislative process quickly thanks to broad support from both sides of the aisle.

WSLCA members Mary Abrams, Director of the Oregon Department of State Lands, and Vanessa Hickman, Arizona State Land Commissioner, testified before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation along with James Ogsbury, Western Governors' Association Executive Director, and Paul Spitler, Wilderness Society Designations Senior Representative. All of these witnesses voiced their support of the legislation which will help fill in the missing pieces of wilderness designated areas, while helping the state land commissioners continue their mandates to generate revenue. "The HR 4901 process is simple and elegant—using the basis of an existing process." Mary Abrams stated during her testimony before the Subcommittee. Kathy Opp, WSLCA Executive Director, states it is a win-win endeavor as "the proposed legislation promotes conservation while giving the states the benefit of their statehood bargain with the United States."

The Advancing Conservation and Education Act of 2014 (ACE) solves an issue that has hampered the ability of state land managers to generate revenue that primarily goes towards K-12 education. When the federal government designates conservation areas, western state trust lands are often trapped within these areas. The entrapment creates problems for both federal and state land managers. ACE streamlines the process for federal and state land managers for states to relinquish entrapped lands in exchange for other lands of equal value. Vanessa Hickman, WSLCA's Vice President, stated that "H.R. 4901 is an effective tool for moving these grid-locked state trust lands into productive use."